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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000177

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SUBJECT: AMIDST THREATS, A GLIMPSE OF COURAGE IN BAGHDAD

REF: A. 2007 BAGHDAD 3545 - BUILDING GOI CAPACITY TO
DELIVER SERVICES
[1](#)B. 2007 BAGHDAD 4002 - I-ESC 7 DECEMBER 2007

Classified By: PolCouns Matt Tueller for Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In a raw and revealing moment following the assassination of a colleague and direct threats against another, a close-knit group of Iraqi officials in Baghdad demonstrated January 22 their determination to continue fighting corruption and militia profiteering in an essential service -- the distribution of kerosene to heat homes during a cold Baghdad winter. END SUMMARY.

PROJECT CLEAN DELIVERY

[1](#)2. (C) In December 2007, an Iraqi inter-ministerial team (with support from the Embassy, the Baghdad PRTs, and MNF-I) launched a pilot project to improve the delivery of kerosene in Baghdad (reftels). Code-named "Project Clean Delivery," the initiative aimed to reduce corruption and choke off a major source of militia funding. The pilot project was an immediate success, and local militants lost no time in striking back. Three terrorists entered the home of one Project Clean Delivery team member, Hani Suleiman, on January 14 and shot him 11 times in front of his family. Another team member began receiving death threats in early December, but has refused to abandon the project. With GoI plans advancing to expand the project to six additional Baghdad neighborhoods, local militants are on the attack, but committed Iraqi officials are standing their ground.

A RAW MOMENT OF COURAGE

[1](#)3. (C) On January 22, in the Iraqi team's first meeting following Suleiman's assassination, a new participant challenged the team's commitment. Zaydun Kramit (strictly protect), Deputy Director General for Distribution in the Ministry of Oil, interrupted the planning session by declaring it impossible to expand the pilot project because Baghdad is not currently receiving a sufficient supply of kerosene. He said that, on average, Baghdad is receiving 500,000 liters of kerosene per day, which is not enough to expand the project to six additional neighborhoods at the same time -- the project's next step, as decided by the Iraqi team members on January 2.

[1](#)4. (C) Amid debate and dissension sparked by Kramit's intervention, the buzz at the meeting suddenly stopped when Kefa Al-Amin (strictly protect), aide to Deputy Prime Minister Barhim Salih, asked everyone to be quiet. He delivered an impromptu speech directly to Kramit: "I have been involved with this project since it started. We have worked successfully together for several months -) so successfully that we invented a new distribution mechanism

that will be used nationwide. And now you have entered the meeting today with a negative attitude, telling us what we can't do. That's not how we work. We come up with solutions for what we can do. Tell us what you can do for us, and that is all we are asking for."

15. (C) At that point, the Iraqi team leader, Saeed Nemah Jabor (strictly protect) of the Iraqi National Security Council, rallied behind Al-Amin: "Yes. That is true. I am not interested in how many liters per day you can provide us for distribution. Even if you tell me you can only get us one liter, then that is fine. Our job is to make sure that that one liter gets to the Iraqi citizens, and not to corrupt officials or militias. I don't care about the number of liters. I care about delivering kerosene to the Iraqi people." Kramit, clearly moved by these statements and the silent stares of the whole Iraqi team, responded: "Yesterday I approached the Minister of Oil to ask for one month off. I received a kidnapping threat against my son. I am already at risk in my job. I know that. But I did not come here to cause problems. I will work with you."

"WE ARE HERE TO DO A JOB AND WE WILL DO IT"

16. (C) Jabour replied with a speech of his own: "Everyone in this room who joined the government did so knowing that he was risking his life, but they did it because they want to build a better Iraq. Anyone who cares to make a change or a difference in fixing the fuel distribution system is bound to be a target of assassination. I have had death threats; my colleagues have been kidnapped and murdered. The criminals will not sit back and allow this new distribution model to

BAGHDAD 00000177 002 OF 002

take away revenue that they are used to stealing. But we are here to do a job and we will do it."

PRESSING AHEAD

17. (C) After this dramatic exchange, the Iraqi team returned to problem-solving and reached a compromise solution: rather than retreat from their initial intention to expand their new distribution plan to additional neighborhoods, they decided to adopt a phased approach that would account for projected supply. They agreed to implement the plan in two neighborhoods per week over a three-week period.
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